

# Motor Vehicle Inspection Division

In response to initiatives to create federal highway safety standards, Missouri Senate Bill 6 was approved during the 1967 legislative session creating the requirement for annual motor vehicle safety inspections in Missouri. The law was to become effective January 1, 1969. However, provisions of the law permitted vehicle owners to obtain a safety inspection 30 days prior to the day on which the annual registration fee was paid. Therefore, it was necessary to begin the inspection program on December 1, 1968, to serve those vehicle owners whose vehicle license was due for renewal in January 1969.

On May 16, 1968, 31 troopers received training in the motor vehicle safety inspection law and regulations at the Highway Patrol's Academy in Rolla, MO, to become program supervisors. The mechanical and technical portions of the curriculum were conducted at a facility previously occupied by Mel Block Chevrolet in Rolla. After training, the troopers began setting up inspection stations within their assigned areas starting July 1, 1968. According to retired Captain Larry Walker, it required quite a bit of convincing to entice repair shop operators to apply for licensure in this new program.

Then-Lieutenant Ernest Van Winkle was appointed director of the safety inspection program, and on November 4, 1969, then-Corporal Larry Walker transferred to headquarters from Troop I as the assistant director.

The new inspection requirement was not well received initially due to perceived improprieties at inspection stations. For example, headlight aim was an original requirement in the inspection process. Due to the many factors that would affect headlight aim, such as fuel tank level, an unacceptable number of vehicles were rejected and the vehicle owners were charged, in many cases, an unreasonable fee to adjust the vehicle's headlights. The headlight aim portion of the regulations was removed from the inspection procedure in late January 1969, at the insistence of then-Governor Warren Hearnes during a meeting with Colonel E.I. "Mike" Hockaday. As a result of this and other related issues, the Missouri Legislature passed a bill during the 1970 session of the General Assembly that would have repealed the safety inspection law. Governor Hearnes choose to veto the bill, ultimately saving the inspection program.

Due to the many responsibilities of the road officers detracting their attention from their safety inspection duties, a suggestion was made to consider utilizing civilian employees to supervise inspection stations. In response, Captain Bill Dolan, commanding officer of Troop C at that time, assigned two commercial vehicle inspectors, Al Neifert and John Evenstad, to the MVI unit in June 1972. This six-month pilot program lasted a full year as the benefits of civilian station supervisors were realized.

On September 30, 1974, 27 civilian employees from the ranks of the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division and the Driver's Examination Division began training at the Patrol's Law Enforcement Academy in Jefferson City to

become motor vehicle inspectors. Upon completion of their training, on October 10, 1974, these men returned to their respective troops to take over the supervision of inspection stations as well as the school bus inspection process. The inspection of school buses was required by law to be conducted by the Highway Patrol annually after the first of February. The new motor vehicle inspectors were supervised at the troop level by uniformed members who were also assigned inspections stations. These members also took care of the administrative process and made MVI-related arrests. At this time, the division was under the direction of Captain Charles Whitehead.

The Motor Vehicle Inspection Division began as an independent program within the Patrol's structure. However, structural changes over time were implemented that combined MVI with other civilian divisions. For example, at one time during the early 70s, Captain Whitehead was in charge of CVE and MVI. In another structural change, all three uniformed civilian divisions, CVE, DE, and MVI, were combined under the direction of Captain Jesse Luker, with Lieutenant Lawrence Webb serving as the director of the MVI section.

In 1983, Senate Bill 315 was signed into law creating an emission inspection requirement in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, and St. Charles County. This requirement was a result of the federal Clean Air Act that declared these counties to be in air quality non-compliance. The responsibility for the emission inspection program fell to the MVI Division and was combined with the safety inspection program. Preparation for the implementation of the BAR 74 emission inspection program was very intensive, requiring research, training, and much additional work by the MVI Division personnel under the direction of Captain Jim Gaines.

Many safety inspection stations initially chose not to purchase the emission inspection analyzers and participate in the emission inspection process. However, nearly all inspection stations that participated in the safety program in the non-attainment area prior to the emission requirement were licensed as safety/emission inspection stations within two years. Over time, additional inspectors were assigned to the MVI unit at Troop C to absorb the added responsibility of the emission inspection program.

On September 1, 1988, Captain Gaines was reassigned to the Driver Examination Division and Captain Joe Faber was appointed the director of the MVI Division. He served in that position until his retirement, when Captain Larry Walker was appointed division director on June 1, 1990. Following Captain Walker's retirement, Lieutenant David Reynolds was appointed division director on September 1, 1991. A change in administration sent Captain Roy Foss to the MVI Division as director on October 21, 1991. In 1994, yet another restructuring combined MVI with DE, and Captain Bill Nelson was tasked with overseeing both sections.

These two sections were once again divided into individual divisions in November 1996, and Captain L.E. "Gene" Lacy was appointed as division director. Under his direction, the School Bus Total Fleet Excellent Award was

established as an annual recognition for school districts. Contractors receiving an approval rating of 95 percent or better during the Patrol's inspection received this award. Additionally, plans were finalized for the first MVI/DE "supersite" to be located in Troop A Lee's Summit. Driver examiners would administer driver examinations and commercial driver's license exams, and MVI division personnel would be conducting MVI business and VIN/salvage examinations at the facility. The supersite opened September 1, 1998.

When Captain Lacy was promoted to major in May 1998, Captain James D. Whitfield was appointed division director. During the 1999 legislative session, SB 19 was signed into law creating a biennial safety inspection requirement. Vehicles with an odd model year were required to receive a safety inspection for registration renewal during odd calendar years, and even model year vehicles required an inspection during even model years. Additionally, new vehicles became exempt for the first two calendar years following their model year of manufacture.

In other legislation, the emission inspection program was assigned solely to the Department of Natural Resources. A contract was awarded to a private vendor and centralized emission inspections began in the non-attainment area at test only locations. A total of nine inspector positions were eliminated from the Troop C MVI Unit due to the reduction of responsibility.

Lieutenant David Perkins was appointed division director on August 1, 2003. In that same year, Senior Chief Inspector James (Bill) Watkins was appointed as the first civilian assistant division director.

Effective August 28, 2006, Senate Bill 583 ended the centralized emission inspection program and created the requirement for an automated decentralized emission inspection process. The intent of the legislation was to combine safety and emission inspections and establish "on-board diagnostic emission inspections" at safety inspection stations in the St. Louis non-attainment area. The MVI Division was once again in the emission inspection business, partnered with the Department of Natural Resources. Together, both agencies began to plan and develop the Gateway Vehicle Inspection Program (GVIP). Following a lengthy bid process, a contract was awarded to SysTech International, a Utah-based company, to develop and provide computer hardware and software to be utilized in the on-board diagnostic inspection process and to maintain a vehicle inspection database where all safety and emission inspection information from GVIP stations would be held and provided to the Department of Revenue for real-time registration processes. The program was implemented on October 1, 2007, one month after the previous centralized contract expired. On October 28, 2007, MVI Chief Paul Rehbein was transferred from Troop C to GHQ, promoted to senior chief and designated the emissions coordinator, the first for the Patrol.

On September 1, 2007, Lieutenant Perkins was promoted to the rank of captain and remained the director of the MVI Division.

The division consists of 62 motor vehicle inspectors assigned to the troops to supervise safety inspection stations (and emission stations within Troop C),

conduct VIN/salvage examinations, and perform school bus inspections. The GHQ staff consists of a director, assistant director, emissions coordinator, clerk IV, MVI analyst, and five clerk typists.